

Territorial Capitol
Centered in block bounded by Main, Center,
First South & First West Streets
Fillmore,
Millard County
Utah

HABS No. U-33

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UTAH
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. U-33

TERRITORIAL CAPITOL

Location: Centered in block bounded by Main, Center, First South and First West Streets, Fillmore, Millard County, Utah.
Geographic Location Code: 43-0240-031
Latitude: 38° 50' 4" N Longitude: 112° 19' 29" W

Present Owner: State of Utah.

Present Occupant: Utah State Park and Recreation Commission

Present Use: Museum

Statement of Significance: Utah's first Territorial Capitol, 1855-1858.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

Territory of Utah
Fillmore City
Millard County
State of Utah

2. Date of erection: 1855

3. Architect: Truman O. Angell

4. Builders, suppliers, etc.: William Felshaw, Superintendent of Construction. Craftsmen: Hyrum Mace, Lorrin Kinney, Joseph L. Robinson, Reuben McBride, Andrew Henry, William Bishop, Ralph Huntsman, N. W. Bartholomew, Thomas R. King, Joseph Holbrook, Theodore Rogers, George Woodward.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

The Utah Territory was created on September 9, 1850. Salt Lake City was first selected as the territorial capitol. In fact, the foundations for a statehouse were laid there on September 1, 1851. (This site was later occupied by the University of Deseret.)

However, in 1851, Brigham Young and the Territorial Legislature decided that the capitol should be more centrally located in the Utah Territory. At that time the Territory covered more than half of Colorado, all of Utah and Nevada, a corner of Wyoming, and for a time a strip of land extending to the Pacific for access to the sea.

Following the organization of the territorial government in 1851, the first session of the legislature resolved that Pahvant Valley (named after the Pahvant Indians) be the seat of territorial government on October 4, 1851, and as a preliminary step passed an act creating Millard County and named the county seat Fillmore in honor of the then President of the United States, Millard Fillmore. On October 21, 1851 Brigham Young and the Commission selected a townsite on Chalk Creek and a survey was commenced to select the site for the state-house. Jesse W. Fox is reported to have conducted the survey. The actual site was selected on October 29, 1851.

"Milestones of Millard" quotes from a copy of the message from Governor Brigham Young to the Territorial Assembly on January 5, 1852 which states, "In accordance with a resolution of the legislature locating the government at Pauvan (sic) Valley, and authorizing me to appoint commissioners to select a site for the capitol, I complied with that requirement by appointing Professors Orson Pratt and Albert Carrington, Jesse W. Fox, Esq., William W. Stains (sic) and Joseph L. Robinson, said commissioners. They immediately proceeded to the performance of their duties and have made their report which I take great pleasure in presenting to you. It appears from their observations that the location chosen on October 29, 1851 is far more central than this city." He also discussed the financing and construction: "At Fillmore City one wing of the State House will probably be finished for the accommodation of the ensuing legislature. This will be built with funds furnished by the general government for the erection of suitable public buildings at the seat of government."

The selection of this particular site was possibly influenced by Parley Pratt, an original Mormon pioneer, who had visited the area in January 1850.

Late in 1851 Brigham Young established a colony of pioneers under the leasanship of Anson Call to settle the area and aid in the construction of the building. (When work commenced on the State House there were not more than 50 families in the settlement.) Truman O. Angell was named Architect, and William Felshaw was made super-

intendent of construction. Mr. Angell was the architect who designed the Salt Lake Temple and Tabernacle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Some entries from his Journal during the design of the building follow:

December 16, 1851 "Sat at the trustee board on the plans for the State House."

January 7, 1852 "State House to be built at Parowan (Fillmore) the hands to be sent from here, and the stone to be cut at Sanpete..."

Several entries in December 1851 and January 1852 refer to working on "plans for the State House", although the drawings for the building were dated September 1851, and the foundation was reported laid in 1851.

In the original plan, the main central mass was to be erected sixty feet square, with four side wings sixty feet by forty feet and three stories high. Over the main central mass was to be built what was described as "a Moorish dome". Only the south wing was completed, consisting of three stories, the first and second floors containing eight rooms each, and the top floor a legislative chamber, about fifty-seven feet by thirty-seven feet.

Probably one of the reasons why more building was not built may be attributed to diminished finances. An appropriation had been promised by the U. S. Congress to complete the building, but after the first appropriation of \$20,000., some misunderstanding arose and no further money was available from the government.

Construction began in the fall of 1851. Red sandstone, hand quarried, was brought in from the mountains east of Fillmore. Native yellow pine, hand hewn, was hauled from Parowan, Utah, ninety miles distant. Construction proceeded slowly, the walls being only partly complete in 1854. In that year, George Woodward was sent to Fillmore from Salt Lake City, along with a number of workmen. The work speeded up, and in early December, 1855 the Statehouse was so near completion that the 5th Session of the Territorial Legislature convened in and dedicated it on December 10, with each branch of the Executive body having its own separate apartments. This meeting of the Legislature was the only full session held in the Statehouse. They organized by electing

Heber C. Kimball as President of the Council and Jedediah M. Grant as Speaker of the House. Several succeeding sessions met there in order to conform to law, but they immediately adjourned to Salt Lake City where they could work more conveniently. The 6th Session met in the still unfinished building on December 15, 1856, but adjourned January 18, 1857 and held the remainder of the session in Salt Lake City. This long journey in the dead of winter convinced the legislators that the capitol was too far from the population. Other causes contributing to the abandonment of the southern capitol were the expense of food, supplies and travel, poor roads and the fact that more legislators lived in the northern settlements. The fertile valleys of the north offered greater inducement for settlement than the sterile soil of the south; thus settlement of the territory near Fillmore was sparse. On December 22, 1858 the 8th annual session convened in Fillmore and a resolution to adjourn to Salt Lake City was passed. This was the last meeting of the Territorial Legislature, or any other territorial or state government in the Statehouse.

During the one full session in 1855-56, the Legislature authorized the election of delegates to a territorial convention for the purpose of preparing a state constitution and petitioning Congress for the admission of the State of Deseret into the Union. Acts were passed creating counties of Cache, Boxelder, Greasewood, Humboldt, St. Mary's, Shambip, Cedar and Malad, many of which were outside the present boundaries of Utah. Other important acts covered incorporations, apportionment, and memorials. One act asked Congress for \$200,000. to build a road to California.

After abandonment of the legislature the building was turned over to Fillmore City and Millard County, and it was used for offices, schools, social and religious gatherings, printing office, jail, and other public needs. Then when others buildings for these purposes became available, the building fell into disuse and decay.

In 1927, through efforts of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Mayor Edward Nelson carried a motion of the Fillmore City Council to ask the State of Utah to restore the building. Governor George H. Dern took interest in the project and on October 25, 1927 a deed conveying title of the site to the State was executed. The State Legislature appropriated \$10,000. for restoration of the Statehouse under supervision of the Utah State Board of Park Commissioners. Young and Hansen, Architects of Salt Lake City, were retained to prepare restoration drawings and specifications. In 1928, contracts were let for construction. Work included a new

copper roof, repainting exteriors, new windows and doors as needed, floors replaced or repaired, walls plastered and painted. On July 24, 1930, the building was re-dedicated and opened to the public as a museum to Utah's past. Officiating at the dedication ceremony was Utah Governor George H. Dern. Members of the Board of Park Commissioners, in addition to Governor Dern, were Lafayette Hinchett, Dr. George Thomas, Dr. E. C. Peterson, and Randall L. Jones. The dedication also made the old Statehouse Utah's first state park. In 1931 the Legislature appropriated \$10,000. for an annex and heating plant, built in 1932.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary sources:

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(Microfilm) Library of Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City.

2. Bibliography:

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Heart Throbs of the West, Vol. 6 (1945) & Vol. 12
(1951), Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake
City, Utah.

Milestones of Millard, 1951, Daughters of the Utah
Pioneers.

Salt Lake Tribune, January 20, 1928.

"Utah's Old Statehouse" pamphlet, Utah State Park
and Recreation Commission. (From Old Statehouse
Museum).

Prepared by John L. Giusti, AIA
September 5, 1967